

CONNECTICUT STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION ● HARTFORD

POSITION ON THE EDUCATION OF GIFTED AND TALENTED STUDENTS

Adopted June 21, 1993

The mission of the Connecticut State Board of Education is to ensure that “each child shall have. . . equal opportunity to receive a suitable program of educational experiences”, as charged in Section 10-4a of the Connecticut General Statutes. The Board recognizes that there are some students with “extraordinary learning ability or outstanding talent in the creative arts, the development of which requires programs or services beyond the level of those ordinarily provided in regular school programs...” (CGS 10-76a(e)). The Board therefore affirms the following:

- As a matter of equity, the public schools should meet the education needs of gifted and talented students.
- Schools should expand enrichment opportunities for students who have been underidentified and underserved, including those from economically disadvantaged, racially and ethnically diverse backgrounds.
- Curricular and instructional modifications should occur in the regular classroom as a part of a systematically integrated approach to meeting the needs of all students/
- In addition to the regular classroom, a range of placement settings should be available for specialized instruction.
- All educators working with gifted and talented students should receive special training.

As required by statute, all students who are gifted or talented must be identified. The purpose of assessment should not be simply to label or to exclude, but rather to determine areas of unusually high performance or potential and to develop them to the maximum extent. The Board recognizes that there exists a broad spectrum of gifts and talents and that exceptionality may be exhibited in one or more specific areas, but not necessarily in all. For these reasons, assessment must be accomplished by methodologically defensible and multiple procedures which can include portfolio review, performance-based assessment, judgment by experts, bias-free standardized tests, as well as information from teachers and parents.

Connecticut schools should provide all students more challenging curriculum and instruction which nurture strengths, interests and abilities. All students, including those with exceptional gifts and talents, deserve a carefully planned educational program which is tailored to individual needs and which helps each develop their special abilities. In the ideal school, the learning experiences for all students should provide a wide range of activities that are designed to foster open-ended growth and to accommodate varying interests, abilities and learning styles.

Quality instruction for gifted and talented students is therefore differentiated by a continuum of service, faster pacing and greater depth and breadth, higher levels of abstraction and complexity, and presentation at an earlier age. Learning experiences which have been particularly successful with these students include in-depth investigations of special topics, directed independent study, regional or statewide off-campus courses, internships, mentorships, and peer teaching, all of which should respect each student’s preferred learning style. In addition, all school staff should be sensitive to gifted and talented students’ social and emotional development, which may not match their advanced intellectual, academic or creative development. Opportunities should be provided for both direct instruction and facilitation by those trained specifically to work with gifted and talented students, as well as by regular classroom teachers. These opportunities should be an integral part of the student’s total program, occurring for a significant portion of school time.

Regular classroom instruction should be structured in ways that accommodate the needs of gifted and talented students and efforts should be made to enable all teachers to provide appropriate curriculum and instruction. It is essential to have a varied repertoire of other instructional settings available to provide suitable educational experiences for these students. Gifted and talented students also need opportunities to interact with each other for a portion of their school time. Interaction with others learning at a similar pace and level provides additional intellectual challenge, social and emotional support, and the opportunity to gain a more accurate perspective on their own abilities and those of others. Because this cannot occur without appropriate training, the Department is committed to helping school districts provide the necessary professional development activities.

No society can afford to neglect its human talent. The Board therefore encourages the state’s public school districts to continue and to enhance their efforts to develop and implement a planned, suitable, challenging and integrated program of instruction for each gifted and talented student.